

A D D R E S S
TO THE
Inhabitants of Glasgow, Paisley, and the
Neighbourhood,
CONCERNING THE
AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE,
BY
A SOCIETY IN GLASGOW.

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GLASGOW, 18th Jan. 1791.

AT a Meeting of the Society in Glasgow, for co-operating with the other Societies in Britain, in effecting the abolition of the Slave-trade: DAVID DALE, Esq; in the Chair.

THERE was read over to the Meeting, a paper on the Slave-trade, intended to be addressed to the Inhabitants of Glasgow, Paisley, and the neighbourhood, which being considered, is approved of, and ordered to be printed at the expence of the Society, and a Copy of the Section of the Slave-ship, published by the Society in London, to be annexed to every Copy of the address.

(Signed) DAVID DALE.



N. B. Papers for obtaining Subscriptions, are appointed to be lodged in the Royal Bank-office; and the Tontine Coffee-room, Glasgow.

A D D R E S S

CONCERNING THE

SLAVE TRADE.

THE question now in dependence before the British House of Commons, relative to the abolition of the African Slave Trade, must be highly interesting to every feeling mind. It respects the essential rights of human nature, and millions of rational beings are involved in its determination.

If it be true, as has been insinuated, that the people of Great Britain, are in any measure unconcerned about the issue, this must be owing to the want of proper information upon the subject. It cannot otherwise be believed that a generous nation, would remain indifferent to a discussion, which is to determine the happiness or misery of so great a proportion of their fellow creatures.

A variety of recent events have conspired to direct the attention of enlightened men to subjects formerly neglected. The situation of the wretched Africans in particular, has been inquired into: And our conduct towards them has been demonstrated to be inhuman and unjust in the extreme.

The circumstances attending the African slave trade, must fill with horror, every person of common humanity. It would be endless, to enumerate all the facts, by which the iniquity of that barbarous traffic, has been proved in the fullest manner. It cannot be

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denied, that on the coast of Guinea, the miserable natives are in great numbers seized by violence, or carried off by fraud and perfidy—that wars are kindled and dreadful devastations produced, for the sole purpose of enslaving the inhabitants of towns and villages¹. There is likewise but too much reason to believe, that those Europeans employed in the trade, not only give encouragement to those shocking measures, but sometimes take an active part in the execution of them. The following well authenticated narrative, is perhaps, the best illustration of what has just been mentioned.

“ In the year 1767, the ships Indian Queen, Duke of York, Nancy and Concord, of Bristol, the Edgar of Liverpool, and the Canterbury of London, lay in Old Calabar river.

“ It happened at this time, that a quarrel subsisted between the principal inhabitants of Old Town, and those of New Town, Old Calabar ; which had originated in a jealousy respecting slaves. The Captains of the vessels now mentioned, united in sending several letters to the inhabitants of Old Town, but particularly to Ephraim Robin John, who was at that time a Grandee, and a principal inhabitant of the place. The universal tenor of these letters was, that they were sorry that any jealousy should subsist between the two parties ; and that if the inhabitants of Old Town, would come on board, they would afford them security and protection, adding at the same time, that their intention in inviting them, was, that they might become mediators and heal their disputes.

“ The inhabitants of Old Town, happy to find, that their differences were likely to be reconciled, joyfully accepted the invitation. The three brothers of the Grandee just mentioned, the eldest of

“ See Clarkson, on the slavery and commerce of the human species.

“ whom was Amboe Robin John, first entered their
“ canoe, attended by twenty-seven others, and being
“ followed by nine canoes, directed their course to
“ the Indian Queen. They were dispatched from
“ thence the next morning to the Edgar, and after-
“ wards to the Duke of York, on board of which
“ they went, leaving their canoe and attendants by
“ the side of the same vessel. In the mean time, the
“ people on board the other canoes, were either di-
“ stributed on board, or lying close to the other
“ ships.

“ This being the situation of the three brothers and
“ of the principal inhabitants of the place, the trea-
“ chery now began to appear. The crew of the
“ Duke of York, aided by the captain and the mates,
“ and armed with pistols and cutlasses, rushed into
“ the cabin with an intent to seize the persons of
“ their three innocent and unsuspecting guests. The
“ unhappy men, alarmed at this flagrant violation of
“ the rights of hospitality, and struck with astonish-
“ ment at the behaviour of their supposed friends,
“ attempted to escape through the cabin windows,
“ but being wounded, were obliged to desist, and to
“ submit to be put in irons.

“ In the same moment in which this atrocious at-
“ tempt had been made, an order had been given to
“ fire upon the canoe, that was then lying by the side
“ of the Duke of York. The canoe soon filled and
“ sunk, and the wretched attendants were either
“ seized, killed or drowned. Most of the other
“ ships immediately followed the example. Great
“ numbers were additionally killed or drowned on
“ the occasion, and others were swimming to the
“ shore.

“ At this juncture the inhabitants of New Town,
“ who had concealed themselves in the bushes by the
“ water side, and between whom and the command-
“ ers of the vessels the plan had been previously con-
“ cerned, came out from their hiding places, and

" embarking in their canoes, made for such as were
 " swimming from the fire of the ships. The ships
 " boats also were instantly manned, and joined in the
 " pursuit. They butchered the greatest part of those
 " whom they caught. Many dead bodies were soon
 " seen upon the sands, and others were floating dur-
 " ing the whole of the day upon the water; and in-
 " cluding those that were seized and carried off, and
 " those that were drowned and killed, either by the
 " firing of the ships, or the people of New Town,
 " *three hundred*, were lost to the inhabitants of Old
 " Town on that day.

" The carnage, which I have been now describ-
 " ing, was scarcely over, when a canoe full of the
 " principal people of New Town, who had been the
 " promoters of the scheme, dropped along side of
 " the Duke of York. They demanded the person
 " of Amboe Robin John, the brother of the Grandee
 " of Old Town, and the eldest of the three on board.
 " The unfortunate man put the palms of his hands
 " together, and beseeched the commander of the
 " vessel, that he would not violate the rights of hos-
 " pitality, nor give up an unoffending stranger to
 " his enemies. No intreaties could avail with the
 " hardened Christian. He received from them a
 " slave of the name of Econg, in his stead, and then
 " forced him into the canoe, where his head was im-
 " mediately struck off, in the sight of the crew, and
 " of his afflicted and disconsolate brothers. As for
 " them, they escaped his fate, but they were carried
 " off with their attendants to the European colonies,
 " and sold for slaves^b.

" This, (says Mr. Clarkson) is a specific instance,
 " and an instance neither to be denied, controverted,
 " nor palliated, of the behaviour of the Europeans
 " to the innocent and unguarded natives of Africa."

" When I was at Goree, (says Mr. Wadstrom) in

^b *Essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species*, pag.
 33, 34, 35.

“ the year 1787, accounts came down by some
“ French merchantmen from Gambia, of the follow-
“ ing particulars.”

“ The captain of an English ship, had enticed se-
“ veral of the natives on board, and finding a favour-
“ able opportunity sailed away with them. His vessel
“ however was, by the direction of Providence driven
“ back to the coast, whence it had set sail, and was
“ obliged to cast anchor on the very spot where this
“ act of treachery had been committed. At this time
“ two other English vessels were lying in the same
“ river. The natives determined to retaliate, boarded
“ all the three vessels and killed most of the crews;
“ the few that escaped to tell the tale, took refuge in
“ a neighbouring French factory.”

It is not disputed, that, in time of peace, British vessels alone annually carry off about 38,000 Africans from their native shore. The most extravagant credulity cannot believe that such immense numbers are got by fair means, or that the conductors of this trade are ignorant of the enormities by which this multitude of slaves is procured. Mr. Clarkson, who, for several years, has devoted himself wholly to the investigation of the facts in question, has specified such a multiplicity of particular instances, as cannot fail to produce the fullest conviction^d.

Of the situation of the negroes, aboard the British vessels, it is painful to give a particular account. The annexed plan presents it to the eye, more powerfully than words can express it. We may easily conceive the tortures endured by such a multitude lying in close vessels, and in a warm climate for sixteen hours together, the men chained in clusters, in a space not exceeding six feet in length, and sixteen inches in width, for each man, the women and children confined in a

^c Wadstrom's Observations during a voyage to the coast of Guinea, in 1787, and 1788.

^d Essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, particularly the African.

still smaller compass, and in most cases with so little room above their heads, that persons of ordinary size cannot raise themselves up; with such rigorous economy, at the same time, that no place capable of holding a single person, from one end of the vessel to the other, is left unoccupied. It is believed there are not many, who can behold such a scene without horror and indignation; or if there should be any person, who can so far divest himself of humanity, as not to be strongly affected by it, it is not likely that he would be much moved by any description that can be given.

The reader may be assured, that what is here delineated, is the real and simple state of the fact. The patrons of slavery, at one time, insinuated that this representation is exaggerated. But a particular investigation of the circumstances tended to confirm all that had been asserted. Government sent a competent judge to measure the Liverpool vessels, and to report. Captain Parry accordingly stated the facts. It appeared undeniable that the men were confined, by the platform above their heads, to the space of two feet seven inches in height. This was the average of nine vessels, and in others the space was still less.

In such a state of confinement, during the passage to the West Indies, putrid fevers and dysenteries must often happen. Instances are accordingly produced in evidence, in which, vessels have lost a third, a half, and even two thirds of their whole number, upon the passage*. Even in ordinary cases, the mortality is great. Mr. Beaufoy has shown, from the evidence produced by the friends of the slave-trade, that, during the space of six weeks, five persons, at an average, in each hundred actually perish, that is, forty three for every hundred in the year; which is seventeen times the usual rate of mortality, "a destruction, " which, if general but for *ten years*, would depopulate the world, blast the purposes of its creation,

* See Clarkson on the comparative efficiency of regulation and abolition, page 29, 30, 31.

“ and extinguish the human race.” This statement refers to the trade in favourable circumstances. From the more distant parts of Africa the greatest proportion of slaves is brought, and among them the mortality is more than double. Besides all this, there are instances of cruelty, with regard to the treatment of the slaves aboard the vessels, so horrible that they almost exceed belief. One shall now be mentioned, which happened in September of the year 1781.

“ The captain of a ship, then on the middle passage, had lost a considerable number of his slaves by death. The mortality was still spreading, and so rapidly, that it was impossible to say either where, or when it would end. Thus circumstanced, and uneasy at the thought of the loss, which was likely to accrue to his owners, he began to rack his ingenuity to repair it. He came at length to the diabolical resolution of selecting those that were the most sickly, and of throwing them into the sea: conceiving, that, if he could plead a necessity for the deed, the loss would devolve from the owners to the underwriters of the vessel.

“ The plea, which he proposed to set up, was a want of water, though neither the seamen, nor the slaves had been put upon short allowance.

“ Thus armed, as he imagined, with an invincible excuse, he began to execute his design. He selected accordingly *One hundred and thirty two* of the most sickly of the slaves. *Fifty-four* of these were immediately thrown into the sea, and *forty two* were made to be partakers of their fate on the succeeding day.

“ But here, as if Providence expressly disapproved of the design, and had determined to cut off his excuse, for sacrificing the rest, and exhibit a proof against him, a shower of rain immediately succeeded the transaction, and lasted for three days.

^f Beaufoy's speech in the house of commons, 17th June, 1778, page 6, 7, 8.

“ Notwithstanding this, the remaining *twenty-six*
“ were brought upon deck to complete the number
“ of victims, which avarice had at first determined to
“ sacrifice to her shrine. The first *sixteen* submitted
“ to be thrown into the sea; but the rest, with a no-
“ ble resolution, would not suffer the contaminated
“ RECEIVERS to touch them, but leaped after their
“ companions, and shared their fate.”

“ Thus was perpetrated a deed, unparalleled in the
“ memory of man, or in the history of former times,
“ and of so black, and complicated a nature, that,
“ were it to be perpetuated to future generations, and
“ to rest on the testimony of an individual, it could
“ not possibly be believed.”

“ When the reader is informed, that such a fact as
“ this came before a court^h of justice in this very
“ countryⁱ; that it is incontrovertibly true, that
“ hundreds can come, and say they heard the melan-
“ choly evidence with tears; what bounds is he to
“ place to his belief? The great God, who looks
“ down upon all his creatures with the same impar-
“ tial eye, seems to have infatuated the parties con-
“ cerned, that they might bring the horrid circum-
“ stance to light, and that it might be recorded in the
“ annals of a public court, as an authentic speci-
“ men of the treatment which the unfortunate Afri-
“ cans undergo, and at the same time as an argu-
“ ment to shew, that there is no species of cruelty,
“ that is recorded to have been exercised upon those
“ wretched people, so enormous that it may not *rea-*
“ *dily be believed*^k.”

Those, who survive the hardships of the voyage, are

^h Essay on the slavery and commerce of the human species, page
98, 99.

ⁱ The action was brought by the owners against the underwrit-
ers, to recover the value of the *murdered* slaves. It was tried at
Guildhall.

^k i. e. of England.

^l Essay on the slavery, &c. p. 114, 115.

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exposed to sale in the West Indies, in whatever way is best suited to the market. They are disposed of to different owners, and in different islands, without regard to the ties of blood, or of friendship. Husband are separated from their wives, and children are torn from their parents for ever.

We wish not to enter into particulars concerning the treatment of the negroes in the West Indies; yet the truth cannot be altogether concealed. It is allowed that there are feeling masters, and even compassionate overseers. But whether this be their general character is a very different matter; certain it is, that the miserable slaves have no legal protection even for their lives. The late amendments proposed, and enactments made by the assembly of Jamaica, however insufficient¹ for the end proposed, are an acknowledgment of the former situation of the negroes. There is reason at the same time to believe, that they have been suggested merely from the parliamentary investigation, and that, when this is over, unless more effectual remedy be applied, they will no longer be heard of.

But whatever may be said, with regard to the injustice and cruelty of the slave-trade, *dire necessity* urged for its continuance. We have been told with confidence, that the abolition thereof would *hurt our revenue, and ruin our West India settlements.*

To this argument it might be sufficient to reply, in the spirited language of a great commoner, that, the trade be founded in iniquity, it ought to be abandoned, whatever may be the consequences. But it has been shown with convincing evidence, that the trade is as impolitic, as it is unjust; and that any inconveniencies, attending the abolition, would be considerable and of a temporary nature; that the

¹ See *notes* on the two reports from the committee of the honourable *house of assembly of Jamaica*, relative to the slave-trade &c. by a *Jamaica Planter*.—In this small tract several astonishing facts on this head are specified.

measure, so essential to justice, in process of time, could even be of great advantage".

If the importation of slaves was prohibited, the stock ready in the islands would be treated with greater tenderness. The great annual decrease of negroes in the West Indies, must be chiefly imputed to their excessive labour, and scanty subsistence. The Author of Nature has formed every species of beings so, as to keep up their numbers under ordinary treatment, and even to increase. It cannot be imagined that the hardy race of negroes, who multiply in Africa so prodigiously, as to spare 100,000 annually (which is the number computed to be exported thence by the Europeans) would, if properly treated in the West Indies, by no means a worse climate, diminish so rapidly as to require an immense annual supply. From the experiments made by individuals, and from the opinion of persons in the West Indies, who are well acquainted with the trade, it appears incontestable, that, under proper management, the stock of negroes in that country would not only maintain itself, but even produce a gradual augmentation.

But the fact seems to be, that slaves have hitherto been frequently treated like post-horses. It is thought by many, however injudiciously, that it is more probable to work them hard, and to supply their place by fresh stock, than to labour them moderately, and be careful about rearing their children. This is a tenet so contrary to every sentiment of humanity and religion, that it must be rejected with abhorrence.

The absence of the proprietors is believed to be a frequent cause of this inhuman and pernicious system. Owners, who live at a great distance, from different considerations, are induced very often to change the persons, whom they intrust with the management of their estates in the West Indies; and as every new

Clarkson on the impolicy of the African slave-trade. This deserves to be read throughout.

overseer is eager to recommend himself to his master, by procuring to him an immediate increase of produce, he is tempted for that purpose to over-work his negroes. The fatal consequences of this conduct are not felt till afterwards; and, when a report of the decrease of the slaves is made, it is ascribed to other causes. The cruel treatment they received is carefully concealed. And thus, the maxims of severity, so agreeable to the domineering spirit of mankind, having become general, are propagated by the force of example; and it requires more than common discernment and boldness, to discover their hurtful tendency, and to try the effects of more gentleness and moderation.

The attempt now making to put a stop to the slave-trade, if successful, must induce the slave-owners to be more careful about rearing the offspring of their negroes. Marriage, so important for that end, will be encouraged among them. All the parental and filial relations will be strengthened; and even under few advantages, the West India slaves may undergo a considerable degree of culture, both intellectual and moral.

Those, who have not attended sufficiently to the subject, are apt to suppose that the design of the present interposition of parliament is entirely to abolish slavery in the West Indies. Could the emancipation of such a number of rational creatures be brought about with safety, it would be a glorious work. But this does not enter into the view of the friends of the abolition of the trade. They are sensible that the present rude and uncultivated state of the slaves does not admit the thought. Men must be formed for enjoying freedom, before they can with propriety be made partakers of it; and the state of the society must be such, that no danger to freemen is likely to ensue.

All that is just now in contemplation is, to put an end to the importation of fresh slaves into the British West Indies. And consequently to promote attention

to those already in the islands; to their health, their subsistence, and the rearing of their children. For these purposes many salutary regulations might be introduced among them. These will be favourable to sobriety, temperance, and virtuous conduct in general. We indulge the pleasing hope, that, along with other advantages, by enjoying the means of religious instruction, they will gradually rise in the scale of being; till in process of time, having become attached to the islands as their native soil, they shall be found qualified to enjoy a higher degree of liberty. A state of well regulated vassalage would be an important step in the progress; this at length might give way to the enjoyment of the full rights of *freemen*. Should that day ever arrive, there is every reason to believe that the prosperity of those islands, and the happiness of their inhabitants, would go hand in hand.

In order to give effect to the necessary and laudable measures now carrying on, in behalf of the much injured natives of Africa, great exertion is requisite, on account of the powerful opposition arising from the contracted views and prejudices of interested persons. In this line of conduct, the society of London for effecting the abolition of the slave-trade, to their immortal honour, have set the example. Neither their time, nor their money has been spared. Amidst many difficulties and discouragements, they have persevered for years in the generous undertaking. Their labour has not been in vain. Conviction has been carried home to the minds of many. Senators of distinguished name have come forward, and, in the most unequivocal terms, have testified their abhorrence of the traffic in human flesh. It is pleasing to contemplate the force of truth. Amidst the contentions of party, we behold the most illustrious characters, forgetting their private differences, combining together in support of a measure which recommends itself to every dispassionate inquirer, and which nothing but the groundless terror of innovation, and the panic

arising from a great imaginary interest, could induce any person to oppose.

Let us not however be too secure. Let us not think it sufficient to commend others. If we approve of the design, it is unquestionably our duty to assist those who are immediately engaged in it. The flourishing towns of Leeds and Manchester, and other parts of Britain, have already joined in co-operating with the society of London, not only by declaring publicly their sentiments in favour of the present measure, but also by contributions to defray the expence, with which it must necessarily be attended. The inhabitants of Glasgow, Paisley, and the neighbourhood, whose manufactures and trade are, by the blessing of God, in so thriving a condition, will surely not be averse to join the general voice of the disinterested part of the nation, and to add their mite in supporting the cause of justice and humanity. It is hoped that even those individuals, who are concerned in the trade of the West Indies, will not be intimidated from doing their duty by a mere shadow of pecuniary interest; and still more, that those who are but remotely connected, by friendship and acquaintance with such traders, will not be deterred by such a paltry consideration, from avowing their opinions, and obeying the clear and strong dictates of morality and religion. We are unwilling to believe that in this enlightened age, a narrow selfishness, and a sordid attention to mere profit and loss, has taken such hold of mankind, as to deaden their feelings of right and wrong, and to render them indifferent to the sufferings of their fellow-creatures.



